The Big House

Today, near the foothills of Pinon Canyon (aka Powder House Canyon) stands a lovely, well cared for 3 story brick Victorian. Known as the McCormick Mansion, the home was originally built in 1891. In the early 1940's it was occupied by the Cross family.

John Sanders Cross had owned a farm in Alfalfa, CO. in the 1930's – the same time Diego Alderete worked there as a sheep herder. Mr. Cross moved his large family into Trinidad and eventually acquired the McCormick mansion.

The Alderete clan, in 1900, already occupied the end of Pinon Canyon. Diego and John Cross had to have known one another. Then when Adolfo Vallejos came to town, he took a shine to one of the Alderete daughters - Pablita. They married, thereby begetting Frank Vallejos and eventually Robert. Young Robert was also well known by John Cross, who had a butcher shop downtown.

"I used to clean chickens and market chickens for the Cross's – they're the ones that used to own that big house. (I'd get) 50 cents a week to clean all that shit and help them kill chickens for (their butcher shop). Dad would want to collect the 50 cents. (I never got) to even look at money. I never had a penny in my pocket until I joined the military…and that didn't last very long either!" (Robert sent all but $10 home to his parents.)

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Robert Vallejos had a growing family, little support from his parents, and an over worked young wife struggling to hold it all together. I surmise Robert pooled what money he had and approached Mr. Cross about the big house. After he secured a (lease) on the McCormick/Cross mansion at 1919 Pinon St., Robert then rented business space downtown. The mansion came furnished…full of antique furniture.

"And I had these big, beautiful satin curtains – red ones! Plus, a grand piano!"

"There was a place where that kind of piano was supposed to be…and there was a lady, her name was Jensen that could play the piano. She could make that piano sing! All that sound traveled through the (house) like in a…um, (a church) where it would resonate."

The house had a commanding view down Pinon St. towards Trinidad. Simpson's Rest; the large hill and focal point of the town; was easily viewed from the upper story windows.

"It had a big attic – you could put a (double wide trailer) in that attic! Man, that was beautiful."

(Personal Input)

I suspect Uncle Diego, before his death in 1965, put in a good word to the Cross family, hoping to enable his war veteran nephew, with the big family, to get back on his feet. However, soon after acquiring all that new debt - all seven of Bob and Nellie's children were placed in foster care by 1964. Gertrude's influence on one of her grandchildren to, "*call this phone number to Child Services, or I will*," sealed their fate. Oldest daughter Cathy had said, none of us kids lived in the big house, but we were able to visit on weekends.'

I suspect Bob secured a 'lease, with option to buy' on the big house. Bob eventually had a gas station, deli and rock shop; plus, he worked on TV's and radios on the side. A lot to support on his limited income, *which was now being demanded by the welfare department to support his children.* His efforts to have a home big enough for all his family, plus businesses to support it, were undermined by the 'seizure' of his kids by the state.

Four more little ones would join the Vallejos clan by 1967. Every day there was a struggle and Bob was falling further and further behind in his debts. If the bills began to back up, and the rent went unpaid, it would explain what happened later that year.

(End Input)

1919 Pinon St. Trinidad, CO.